



AD HOC PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE MASTER PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING #8

City of Alexandria | Department of Transportation & Environmental Services
Wednesday, August 12th, 2015 | 7:00-9:00 pm
City Hall, Room 1101 (Sister Cities Conference Room) | 301 King Street

NOTES

Welcome, Introductions

Committee members in attendance:

- Scott Anderson, Vice Chair
- Timothy Hanson
- Linda Couture
- Mollie Danforth
- William Schuyler
- John Fennel
- Alan Dinsmore
- Pablo Torres

Project staff:

- Steve Sindiong, City of Alexandria
- Carrie Sanders, City of Alexandria
- Hillary Poole, City of Alexandria
- Karen Callahan, City of Alexandria
- Natham Imm, City of Alexandria
- Alia Anderson, Toole Design Group
- Mauricio Hernandez, Toole Design Group

Public:

- Eight (8) persons signed the sign-in sheet

Project Milestones / Updates (Scott Anderson, Steve Sindiong)

- Committee Vice-Chair, Scott Anderson welcomed everyone to the meeting and led introductions of the committee and project staff.
- T&ES staff Steve Sindiong provided a project update. Since the last meeting, the pedestrian and bicycle project prioritization lists have been drafted and staff review is underway. These will be presented at the September 24, 2015 public meeting, and sent to the Ad Hoc Committee prior to the public meeting. The Draft pedestrian engineering strategies have been revised based on the input received at the last Ad Hoc meeting and new pedestrian and bicycle Program and Policy strategies have been developed.
- Tonight's meeting will focus on receiving input on the draft list of strategies that will be included in the plan.

Draft Pedestrian and Bicycle Strategies (Hillary Poole, Alia Anderson)

- T&ES staff Hillary Poole provided a summary of several draft strategies that have been discussed at previous Ad Hoc Committee meetings and through public input. All of the strategies could be implemented through funding additional dedicated staff that can focus on implementation of strategies, especially related to the education and outreach components of the plan.
 - o Prioritize ongoing maintenance and repair - This strategy outlines the need to prioritize maintenance and repair, including snow removal, on popular trails (ex. Coordinating with National Parks Service on the Mount Vernon Trail) and train staff on how to properly clear/maintain areas without blocking bicycle and pedestrian areas

- Improving access and safety for trail users - This strategy is focused on using wayfinding, removing obstructions, and widening access points to make it easy for people walking and biking to access trails.
- Explore implementing a pilot open streets event - This concept is growing in popularity around the country and could help increase education opportunities and demonstrate the benefits of the different facilities.
- Pursue funding to oversee education and outreach initiatives - By pursuing grants for safety campaigns, additional staffing and community coordination, the City will be able to expand its education and outreach efforts.
- Partner with local groups to support bicycle education, health organizations and schools - Through this combined strategy, the City may be able to reach out to a much larger pool of residents and visitors in addition to being able to access other sources of funding for implementing programs that target the promotion of active transportation, promoting healthy workplace programs, and programs that target childhood obesity.
- Implement a Vision Zero program - This strategy would allow staff to develop the framework, scale and budget needed to implement a Vision Zero program in Alexandria. The City/consultant shared examples including New York City; San Mateo, CA; Santa Barbara, CA; and Boulder, CO. Many of these jurisdictions have made traffic safety a critical public health issue as all deaths are preventable and safety should be a top priority. In many cities, dedicated staff and budget have been provided for these efforts.
- Striving for Gold designation by the Walk and Bike Friendly Communities programs - This will help demonstrate the City's commitment to providing safe and comfortable facilities for people walking and biking. It will also help the City's image at the national/regional level by promoting it as a city that supports a wide array of transportation choices for residents, workers and visitors.

General Discussion, Feedback and Questions Raised by the Committee:

1. City should focus on maintenance and, in particular, work with trash collectors to ensure that trash cans don't block sidewalks after they are emptied.
2. Snow removal came up as an important issue, as snow is usually left on curb cuts or shoveled onto sidewalks. There is also a need to keep working with businesses/ residents to clear sidewalks after snow (particularly businesses). Furthermore, the program for free snow clearance should be advertised more widely.
3. The most common trail obstructions are bollards that are intended to block vehicles from using trails. The City is focusing on providing different treatments for different places to improve safety for all users while allowing vehicle access for those that need it (i.e. maintenance and emergency access).
4. Regarding signage and wayfinding, there is a need to ensure uniformity and readability, particularly for older adults or people with lower-vision. The City follows the font standards set forth by the Manual for Uniform Transportation Control Devices (MUTCD), which contains all approved highway engineering standards including font sizes and coloring.
5. In addition to outreach to women, non-English speaking communities and lower income groups, there needs to be targeted outreach to older adults. There is also a need for

educating drivers and older individuals about the rules of the road. An example program in Marin County, California was presented, where drivers sign a pledge to drive slower, and display a placard in their cars.

6. There is a need to create more consistency in sidewalk surface types. City staff noted that a study and plan regarding sidewalk types was completed one year ago, to help with this issue. The new policy identifies where brick and other surface types are appropriate and outlines installation/material standards that will stay smoother (more level) over time. Additionally, each year, City maintenance addresses a list of sidewalks with deficiencies that need to be replaced / repaired.
7. A committee member recognized the need for additional staff to help track all the strategies and measureable outcomes, as well as to provide additional outreach to the community. However, they also acknowledged that hiring more people is not easy due to budget constraints.
8. A Vision Zero program should include specifics on what analyses should/could help achieve a Vision Zero target. The City should allocate more resources to further reviewing the data to understand when and where the deficiencies exist.
9. Emergence of E-rollerblades and E-bikes is something that this Plan should address. The committee felt strongly that the plan should recommend revising the city code to clarify where these modes fit in the overall transportation spectrum and where they should be allowed/not allowed. However, the committee noted that these ordinances do not apply to mobility devices because of ADA guidelines which trump any other City ordinances.
10. It is important that the City track and revisit the implementation of these strategies over time. City staff noted that the City's Transportation Commission is the standing body that supervises Plan implementation, and that the City has numerous public input avenues to also help with the monitoring of outcomes. Also, the plan includes a requirement that staff report to that body periodically with updates on plan meeting performance measures and implementation.
11. While striving for national recognition (i.e. bicycle and pedestrian friendly cities status) help the City compare/compete with its peers, it is also important that we continue to set our own goals and benchmarks based on local needs and issues. Local input and direction should be considered first over national program goals.
12. The only way to achieve complete safety for bicyclists is through separation from motor vehicle traffic. Special focus is needed regarding the elimination of conflict points.

Public Comment

1. Education programs should focus on all users (bicyclists, pedestrians and drivers). A great local program to look into is the PAL (Predictable, Alert, Lawful) program in Arlington County which uses targeted outreach for bicyclists, pedestrians and drivers. The City should look into this program but there needs to be some coordination/maybe additional staff.
2. The City should also focus on educating people about new laws related to bicycles and pedestrians.
3. While speed limit alone doesn't change driver attitudes, as part of its Vision Zero initiative, if implemented the City of Alexandria should reduce the speed limit to 25 MPH to make streets more comfortable for people walking and biking.
4. Regarding the existing strategies, why are some strategies focusing on discouraging bicyclists from going too fast? Do they go faster than cars, or faster than the speed limit? Strategies should focus on everyone, not only bicyclists as we are all sharing infrastructure.
5. Glad to see the committee focusing on skateboarding and rollerblading as methods of transportation. The Plan needs to acknowledge other forms of travel so they can be categorized / regulated.

6. The City needs to commit to looking at sidewalk width to explore other areas where bikes may not belong on sidewalks (beyond the currently prohibited areas).
7. While achieving the Gold categorization is great, it is important to note that it will be very expensive to achieve. The plan should therefore emphasize on things that can be immediately implemented.
8. The Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) Health Instructional Specialist, Mike Humphries, introduced himself. He will be leading the Safe Routes to Schools program for ACPS.
9. It doesn't seem like the plan puts forth implementation of new, major cross-city bicycle facilities (bike avenues). (City staff responded that these have been covered in past meetings and that the public meeting on September 24th will show enhanced bicycle facilities throughout the city and connecting to other jurisdictions.)
10. On the southeast section of the Mount Vernon Trail (near Jones Point) that connects to Union Street, there is a need to try to slow down bicyclists or create more space for the diversity of users, especially on days where pedestrian/bicycle traffic is high. This is another example of where NPS could collaborate with City.
11. The Vision Zero program should also focus on implementing a standardized accident report to improve data collection related to bicycle and pedestrian collisions. The City should work with police department on this initiative.
12. There is a need for additional signage to indicate which streets are best for fast bicycle transportation (i.e., faster for commuters or fitness riders).
13. When we talk about separation and improved bicycle facilities, we need to understand whether the City has the budget to accomplish these types of improvements.

Committee Member Updates

- The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) is conducting a Northern Virginia Regional bicycle study and the website is now public. City staff will look into posting links to it on the LocalMotion website.
- The Commission on Aging is working on an application for the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Age Friendly City designation.
- A committee member expressed appreciation for the new signs and other changes happening throughout the City – some of which seem to stem from conversations had at past Ad Hoc meetings.

Wrap Up and Next Steps / Next Meeting date

- The second public meeting for the project will be on September 24th at the Durant Center. The following topics will be addressed: Vision, goals and objectives; bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements, Complete Streets, project prioritization and implementation strategies.
- Over the next several weeks, City staff will present preliminary recommendations of the plan (primarily the bicycle network and pedestrian safety needs) and seek input at various community events such as farmers markets.
- The next Ad Hoc committee meeting will be in November, and will address recommendations and implementation. Details to come.
- The City expects that the Draft plan will be available for public review in January and the Plan will be brought to the City Council in April 2016 for adoption.